

Van Winkle waking up and seeing all these changes in the world, but he finally could feel comfort because the school looked the same.

My kids graduated from college not long ago, but not too long ago high school. One of the things that consistently has caused me great concern is that the schools they went to look dangerously like the schools I went to. Yet we carry around personal computers. Every single one of us operates with computers. We have computers right here in the Senate Chamber. Yet we do not have one on the desk for every child in America. So we are leaving kids behind in a lot of different ways. We say in our budget resolution, that is not OK. We want to turn that around. So we put dollars back. We stopped the cuts the President has, and we invest more dollars in education and innovation.

Then we say if you are working hard and you are trying to make ends meet, and you are working in a job that does not have health insurance for your family, you ought to be able to know that when you go to bed at night your kids have health care and you can do something about it if they get sick. That is what we do by making a commitment to fully fund what is called SCHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Program. This is something that is available to working families. Low-income families are able to receive Medicaid. These are families who are working hard, families whose minimum wage we raised not long ago. So maybe they only have to work two jobs now instead of three to make ends meet, but they still do not have health insurance. We make a commitment to provide that health insurance for every child of a working family.

That is a very important value. It is a very important principle. I hope we are going to come together with strong bipartisan support to be able to do that.

We also then keep our promise to our veterans. We all know what has happened at Walter Reed. We know also there are other very serious system problems. In my State of Michigan, people wait too long to see a doctor. They drive too far to get basic kinds of tests, blood drawn, or x rays. We need to do a better job for our veterans. We need, frankly, to get them out of the yearly budget process and put them into a situation where they know their funding is assured.

Our budget, for the first time ever, I assume—certainly for the first time since I have been here; and I have asked others, and I think it is the first time ever—we have in the budget the amount recommended by the independent budget which is organized by all the veterans groups. The veterans groups have come together. They analyze the VA health system and other needs and recommend to us what is needed.

For the first time, our budget for veterans health care and other critical

needs matches what they are recommending. This is very important. We are making veterans—our men and women who are coming home from wars, who put on a veteran's cap, who may have tremendous hardships, physical challenges, mental challenges, financial challenges from being extended more than once—and with serious issues for families—we make veterans a top priority and say we are going to keep our promise to our veterans. That is an integral part of our budget resolution.

Then we go back to what we have always been about. The other side will say: Well, we are for tax increases. No. No. We just want to see the folks who are working hard, who are the majority of Americans, get the tax cut. I am not interested in another tax cut for somebody who makes over \$1 million a year, who got \$118,000 back in a tax cut last year. I want somebody making \$118,000 a year to get a tax cut. We start by saying the alternative minimum tax, which is creeping up and hitting middle-income people, should be changed so it does not become the alternative middle class tax. We are very focused on making sure the other parts of the Tax Code that are important to families remain in place and that we, in fact, are giving middle-class tax cuts.

Then we take a look at all of the efforts to deinvest, to defund that the President recommended in education, cutting the COPS Program again, firefighter grants, various kinds of technology programs, environmental programs in Michigan, and I know in Ohio as well. The manufacturing extension partnership is important for small and medium-sized businesses to be able to help them receive technical assistance, to be able to compete in the global economy, to be able to hire more people. We have restored the funding for that. We address other technology programs. So we also reject the President's efforts to move away from critical areas of priority and need of the American people.

So there are a lot of other pieces in this budget, but these basically, overall, are the important priorities that we have placed in the budget that say to the American people: We care about you. We want to put you and your family first. We know that you are squeezed on all sides. If you are from Michigan and losing your job or being asked to take less in your job or pay more for your health care or lose your pension, it is time to fix that. It is time to make you a priority.

That is what this budget does. It makes the people who work hard every day, who make this country run—the middle class, the people working hard every day to get into that middle class, who keep the economic engine of this country going—it makes them the priority. That is what this is all about. It is about whose interests are going to be represented in this budget.

I am very proud of the fact we are representing the interests of the major-

ity of Americans, the folks who are working hard and seeing the gas prices go up along with the oil company profits, who are seeing their health care costs go up, maybe losing their pension, seeing the cost of college go up for their kids. Everything is going up and up and up and up. Those are the folks whose pockets we want to put money back into. That is where we want the tax cuts to go. That is where we want the tax cuts to go. That is where we want the investments in the future to go. That is what this budget resolution does.

I am very proud of the fact that we return fiscal discipline and we put middle-class families first. It is about time.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RETIREMENT OF GENERAL JOHN ABIZAID

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last Friday GEN John Abizaid handed over the job of Commander of the U.S. Central Command to ADM William J. Fallon and officially entered retired life, a civilian citizen for the first time in more than 30 years.

General Abizaid entered the U.S. Army as a second lieutenant after graduating from West Point in 1973. General Abizaid is among the elite of the Army's infantry commanders—an Airborne Ranger. Over his time in the military, he led paratroopers in several key units of the 82nd Airborne Division, including the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment and the 325th Airborne. In command of a Ranger Rifle Company, he was one of the first commanders on the ground during the invasion of Grenada. He deployed to Kurdistan during the first gulf crisis, was Commandant of West Point, Division Commander of the Big Red One, Deputy Commander of Central Command during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and took over as Commander of Central Command in 2003.

What most has distinguished General Abizaid is his combined ability as both a warrior and as one of our Nation's great strategic thinkers regarding the Middle East. He knows and understands the Middle East and its strategic implications for American security. As a young officer, John Abizaid